

**Talitha Coggins, Achievement First,
Appropriations Committee Hearing, February 16, 2010**

Good evening Members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Talitha Coggins and I am a proud parent of a 2nd-grader at the Achievement First Hartford Academy. I wanted to share a little about my experience with the school and to ask for your support for my son Rodney and his fellow students at Achievement First.

Rodney is in the xxxx class, which was named for the college where his teacher graduated. Every class at Achievement First is named for a higher learning institution and every scholar will tell you what year they will graduate from college. The Academy is designed that way to ensure that students believe from the moment they enter those doors that they are expected to not only attend but to graduate from college.

Achievement First's commitment to education is just one of the reasons I love this school. I have seen amazing advances in my child's academic ability and he has progressed much further than he would have at a traditional public school. So I have to wonder why if I chose to send my child to a school where he is doing so much better that his funding is less. I feel as though from a funding standpoint we are being punished for choosing a great school.

I recently learned that the State is applying for Race to the Top monies being offered by the federal government. This money will recognize states that have made a real and demonstrated commitment to education reform and closing the achievement gap. In my opinion, charter schools have done just that, yet our legislation does not support them. I wonder how competitive we will be given our position.

I believe in Achievement First because they believe in Rodney. I know the State is facing many challenges this year, but children should be the last thing we put at risk. If Connecticut had legislation that allowed funding to follow the child, every school would perform better because funding would depend on it. It would support parental choice, which I believe is one of the best ways to support education reform.

I chose Achievement First and I am glad I did. Please support our charter schools and money follows the child. Our children deserve that.

Thank you.